

CHANDAMAMA IN SINHALA



Through the ages Sri Lanka has been a land very dear to India's heart. No wonder that Emperor Ashok chose his dear son and daughter to carry the message of the Buddha to Sri Lanka, while to other lands he sent other emissaries. The attitude of Sri Lanka towards India has been no different.

We are delighted to bring to the notice of our readers that on the auspicious day of the last *Buddha Poornima* that fell on May 22, your magazine launched its Sinhala edition, *AMBILIMAMA*. The day, known in Sinhala as *Vesak Poya* (Vaishakh Poornima)—which marks the birth, Siddhi as well as the Mahanirvana of the Buddha—was a day of great rejoicing for the people of Sri Lanka and *Chandamama* is happy to have contributed a new factor to the spirit of the day.

Publisher of your Magazine was warmly received by both Prosident, Shri J. R. JAYEWARDENE and the Prime Ministor, Shri R. PREMADASA of Sri Lanka on this occasion. Shri Reddi presented them with copies of the new edition. In a message, the Prime Minister said, "This publication will not only create opportunities for children to acquiro an understanding of the cultural relationship that has oxisted between Bharat and Lanka from ancient times but also strengthen the bonds of friendship and cooperation between the peoples of the two countries."

We feel particularly happy at taking this step for the causo of the children in the international field on the Children's Year — 1979.



READ IN THIS ISSUE

LEGENDS AND HISTORY

A FLOWER FROM HEAVEN: Story of the celestial nymph who strayed into the world—through pictures ... *Page 7*

RAMDAS: The Sage who was the power behind the great Sivaji ... *Page 23*

WHY THE SAGE KEPT SILENT: The legend of the man who saw a fool in everybody but himself! ... *Page 27*

STORIES

THE GENEROUS STRANGER: Who was the mysterious midnight knocker? A tale from the Arabian Nights ... *Page 11*

THE PRINCE AND THE WIZARD: Continuing the fiction of adventure and chivalry ... *Page 18*

The Unique Bridegroom ... *Page 16*

Bridegroom meets the Bride ... *Page 27*

Strange story of Padmaja ... *Page 28*

The Rehearsal ... *Page 33*

Windfall for the forgetful ... *Page 36*

The Fatal Curiosity ... *Page 49*

Adventure in the Forest ... *Page 51*

The Dacoit's last Adventure ... *Page 55*

AND THE FARE OF FEATURES

Golden Words of Yore ... *Page 6*

Story of The Merchant of Venice ... *Page 34*

Veer Hanuman ... *Page 43*

Monuments of India ... *Page 59*

Towards a Brighter English ... *Page 60*

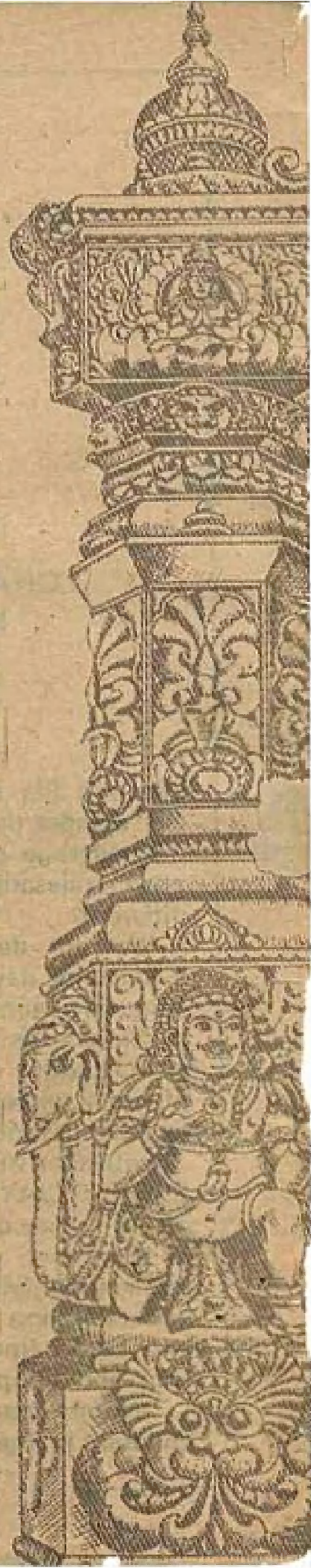
Your Questions Answered ... *Page 61*

A Tale that needs a Title ... *Page 62*

Photo Caption Contest ... *Page 63*

Printed by B. V. REDDI at Prasad Process Private Ltd. and published by B. VISWANATHA REDDI for CHANDAMAMA CHILDREN'S TRUST FUND (Prop. of Chandamama Publications), 2 & 3, Arcot Road, Madras-600 026 (India). Controlling Editor: NAGI REDDI.

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CHANDAMAMA

Vol. 9

JULY 1978

No. 1

Founder : CHAKRAPANI

WE INVOKE THE NINE MUSES

Through the ages and almost in all the countries, Nine has been looked upon as a magic number! There are numerous legends telling us about the special power of Nine.

And do you know the Nine Muses who are guardians of the various arts? They are Calliope who inspires epic poetry; Clio who presides over history, Erato who reigns over the poetry of love, Euterpe who guides music and lyric poetry, Melpomene, the goddess of tragedy, Polyhymnia who inspires sacred lyrics, Terspichore, the spirit behind dancing, Thalia, the Muse of comedy, and Urania the goddess of astronomy.

There is a very special reason for us to remember the Nine Muses. With this issue your magazine enters the Ninth Year of publication. We have so much to do with those arts. Let the Nine Muses inspire us, so that our Ninth Year becomes a dynamically creative year, memorable enough to guide us into an ever widening future.



GOLDEN WORDS OF YORE

जितेन्द्रियस्त्वं विनयस्य कारणं गुणप्रकर्षो विनयादवाप्स्यते ।
गुणप्रकर्षेण जनोऽनुरज्यते जनानुरागप्रभवा हि सम्पदः ॥

Jitendriyatvaṁ vinayasya kāraṇaṁ guṇaprakarṣo vinayādavāpsyate
Guṇaprakarṣeṇa jano'nurajyate janānurāgaprabhavā hi sampadaḥ

Through control of one's passions and impulses one grows truly humble. Humility earns real virtues. Virtues make one dear to others. When others love you, you are prosperous.

The Alankara Sarvasvam

नम्रत्वेनोन्नमन्तः परगुणकथनैः स्वान् गुणान् कथापयन्तः
स्वार्थान् संपादयन्तो विततपृथुतरारम्भयत्नाः परार्थे ।
क्षान्त्यैवाक्षेपकक्षाक्षरमुखरमुखान् दुर्जनान् दुःखयन्तः
सन्तः साश्चर्येचर्या जगति बहुमतः कस्य नाभ्यर्चनीयाः ॥

Namratvenonnamantaḥ paraguṇakathanaiḥ svān guṇān khyāpayantaḥ
Svārthān sampādayanto vitataprthutarārambhayatnāḥ parārthe
Kṣāntyaivākṣeparukṣākṣaramukkharamukhān durjanān duḥkḥayantaḥ
Santaḥ sāścaryacaryā jagati bahumatāḥ kasya nābhycarṇīyāḥ

The virtuous prosper through humility; they reveal their praiseworthy qualities by recognising such qualities in others; by guarding the interest of others they safeguard their own interest; they put to shame those who attack them with harsh criticism by forgiving them; such noble souls are adored by the whole world.

The Bhartriharishatakatrāyam

HUMILITY AND PROSPERITY

A FLOWER FROM HEAVEN



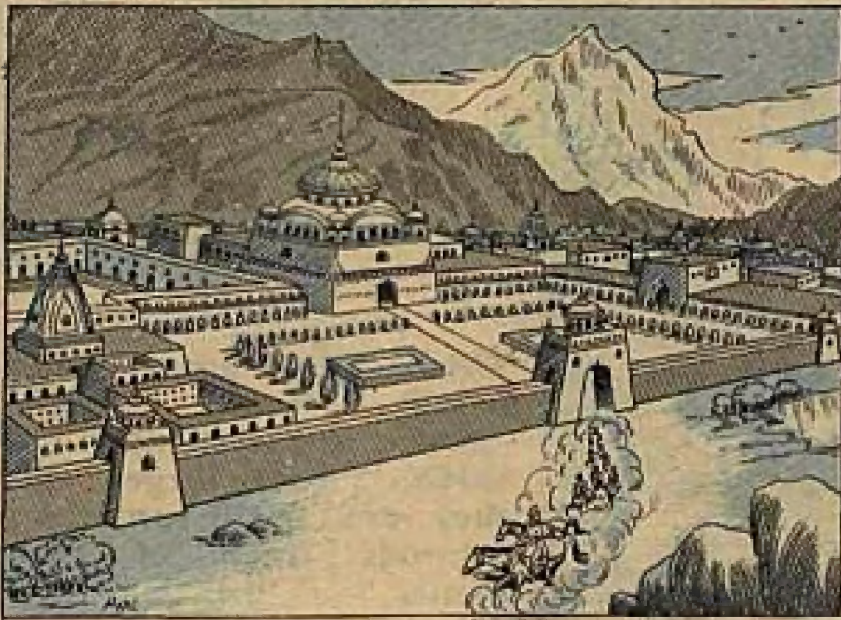
There are times when beings from celestial spheres are born upon the earth. They forget who they are until something reminds them of their home.

Such a being was Indumati, the princess of Vidarbha, as beautiful as a nymph.

In fact, she was a nymph, a danseuse in Indra's court. One day, Indra sent her to disturb the meditation of Trinavindu, a sage who, Indra feared, would become spiritually very powerful and would claim the Indra-hood.



The nymph tried to divert the sage's attention from his askesis. The sage, no doubt, was disturbed, but instead of feeling attracted towards the nymph he felt furious and cursed her, saying that she be born as a human being.



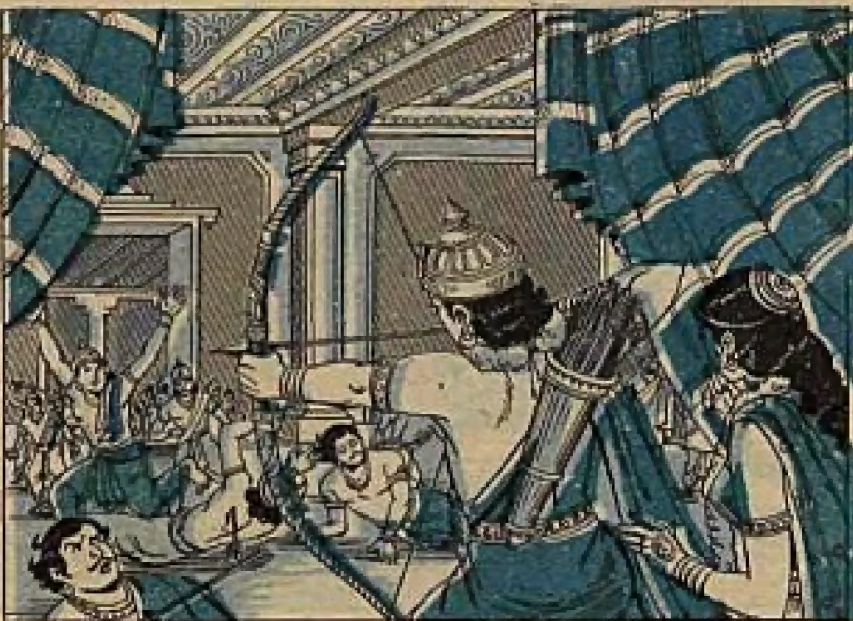
The nymph was born as the daughter of King Bhoja of Vidarbha. As she came of age, the king announced her *swayamvara*, a function where the princess was to choose her bridegroom from an assembly of princes. Heralds were despatched in all directions with King Bhoja's invitations to the eligible princes.

Aja, the young king of Ayodhya proceeded to the *swayamvara*. On the way, he was suddenly attacked by an elephant. He had to fight the stubborn creature.



The elephant fell to the king's sword. Out of it emerged a *gundharva*. He greeted the king and said that a curse had turned him into an elephant. Happy to be restored to his real self, he offered the king a highly prized arrow which would make his enemies swoon away.

At the *swayamvara*, Princess Indumati chose King Aja as her bridegroom. But all the assembled princes desired her hand. They grew extremely jealous of Aja.



Soon there ensued a battle between Aja on one hand and most of the assembled princes on the other hand. But the battle was short-lived. Aja applied the arrow given to him by the *gun-dharva*. His adversaries swooned away en masse.

Aja galloped back to Ayodhya with his bride, the beautiful Indumati. Happily they lived as king and queen. Indumati proved herself Aja's worthy consort.





To the royal couple was born a bonny son. It was this prince, who, in due course, was to be famous as King Dasaratha, the father of Rama.

Years passed. One day the great sage, Narada, was descending from heaven to the earth. His Veena was adorned with a garland of *Parijatas*, the flowers of heaven. Suddenly the garland fell off. It came down—down.



Queen Indumati was strolling in her garden. The *Parijata* garland fell on her. Instantly she remembered that she too, like the flowers, belonged to heaven. She fell down, dead; her spirit left for her real home. King Aja too passed away soon. The young Dasaratha ascended the throne.

THE GENEROUS STRANGER

A day did not pass without Bishar bestowing gifts on one needy man or the other. His fame as a generous man had spread wide. He was welcome in the houses of the noblemen. Indeed, even the Caliph liked him very much and was happy to see him from time to time.

But Bishar fell into bad days. Those who had borrowed from him did not return him his dues and he had kept no document to proceed against them. Those who did business with

him betrayed him, and he had no mind to bring accusation against them in the Governor's court.

For some days some of his friends helped him. But they too grew tired of him. Those who paid frequent visits to him during his days of prosperity avoided him. Bishar saw the ways of the world and felt extremely remorseful.

"My future is dark. I do not wish to see anybody, nor do I wish anybody to see me," he





told his wife. He shut the doors and windows of his house and never went out.

It was a dark night. Bishar sat alone in his outer room, sad as ever. Someone knocked on his door. Bishar ignored the knock for a while, but it continued.

"I may not be having any true friend, but I have no enemy either. No bandit will visit my house, for my poverty is common knowledge," thought Bishar and curious to see who the midnight knocker was, opened the door.

He saw the knocker, but could not recognise him. The

stranger sat on a horse, his face below his nose covered by a kerchief.

"Who are you? What do you want of me at this hour of the night?" demanded Bishar.

"I am a friend. You are in distress, aren't you? I hope, this bag will help you come out of your difficulty," said the stranger and he handed over a bag to Bishar.

"But tell me first, who are you?" asked Bishar, surprised. "I am the 'Generous who understands the condition of the Generous'. Goodbye!"

"What you told is not enough," shouted Bishar. But the stranger galloped away.

Bishar now realised that the bag was quite heavy. It contained coins, but he did not know of what value the coins were.

He asked his wife to light a lamp. But his wife informed him that there was not a drop of oil in the house to do so!

But his house had been illumined by the next night, for the bag contained a large amount of *dinars*. Bishar paid off all his debts and began his business with greater care and with trusted people to help him.

After he had recovered his

position, Bishar went to meet the Caliph.

"Welcome, Bishar, how is it that I did not see you for a long time?" asked the Caliph.

Bishar told him all about the bad days he had lived through and how he got over his misfortune through the help of an unknown friend.

The Caliph grew curious to know who that 'Generous who understands the condition of the Generous' was. But Bishar could not satisfy his curiosity as he knew nothing more about the stranger himself.

The Caliph took great sympathy for Bishar who had passed

through a very difficult period and appointed him as the Governor of Mesopotamia.

The man who was the Governor of Mesopotamia had proved quite extravagant. He had neglected sending his dues to the Caliph. To Bishar, the new appointment, though a matter of pride, was also a matter of some embarrassment. It was because the dismissed Governor, Fayaz, had been a friend of his.

However, obeying the Caliph's order, Bishar proceeded to Mesopotamia.

"If ever you come to know who the 'Generous who understands the condition of the



'Generous' was, let me know forthwith," the Caliph instructed Bishar.

Bishar entered the city of Al-Jazirah, the capital of Mesopotamia, with due pomp and show. He was courteously received by the retiring Governor, Fayaz, his old friend.

When Bishar took charge from Fayaz, he found that Fayaz failed to give proper account of a huge sum of money.

"My sentiment as your friend forbids me to be harsh, but you must return the money immediately. Otherwise you will be treated as provided by law,"

said Bishar.

"How can I return any money? It is not that I have kept the money with me! I have spent all," was the reply Fayaz gave.

Fayaz was arrested and put behind the bars. A month passed. Bishar asked him again to return the missing amount. But Fayaz only repeated his reply.

One night Bishar received a private note from an unknown person. It read, "O wise Governor, don't you know how to be generous towards the 'Generous who understands the condition of the Generous'?"



Bishar trembled in excitement. He called for his guards and at once set out for the jail.

Behind the bars Fayaz looked gloomy and pale. He was in chains. Bishar freed him and hugged him and wept bitterly and exclaimed, "My friend, it is I who should be in chains. But why did you not reveal the fact that it was you who had pulled me out of my predicament?"

"My friend, it was not to receive something in return from you some day that I had been generous to you. Nobody in the world knew what I had done to you or how I had introduced myself to you, save my wife. I

am sure, she must have managed to send the message to you," said Fayaz.

Bishar lost no time in starting for a meeting with the Caliph, taking Fayaz with him.

"O Commander of the Faithful! I have found out the mysterious man, the 'Generous who understands the condition of the Generous'. Here he is!" Bishar announced to the Caliph.

The Caliph heard everything and said, "Well, let me also become generous enough and appreciate why Fayaz has failed to send his dues regularly to me."

He then made Fayaz the Governor over Armenia.





The Unique Bridegroom

This happened long ago. Shivshekhar, a poor priest of Kashi, had a daughter named Manasi. She was a charming girl and of extreme sweet nature.

Manasi was a poor man's daughter. It would have been natural for her to marry a poor young man. But her father was in no mood to marry her off like that. He looked for a virtuous and wealthy bridegroom.

One day they heard a strange announcement. It said: We need a bride for a unique young man. He cannot stand without support. He remains always unmindful of his household. He fails to do anything without the advice of others. He is

obliged to bear a burden on his head most of the time. His nature is like that of a cloud. Only such fathers who consider their daughters really virtuous and beautiful should meet us tomorrow at the tavern at the city's east-end.

Whoever heard the announcement laughed. "Look at the fun," they commented, "a lame young man who cannot think for himself and who earns his livelihood through carrying burden, and who is as fickle-minded as the cloud, desires to marry a virtuous and beautiful bride!"

But Manasi turned to her father and said, "Let us go to the tavern!"

Shivshekhar was surprised. But he had a great faith in his daughter's wisdom. He went to the tavern along with his daughter.

A stranger who represented the bridegroom's family received them. Manasi told him at once, "I am willing to marry the young man about whom the announcement was made!"

"I hope, you have heard all the qualities of the bridegroom with attention!" said the stranger.

"Yes, I agree that he is a unique bridegroom," said Manasi with a meaningful smile.

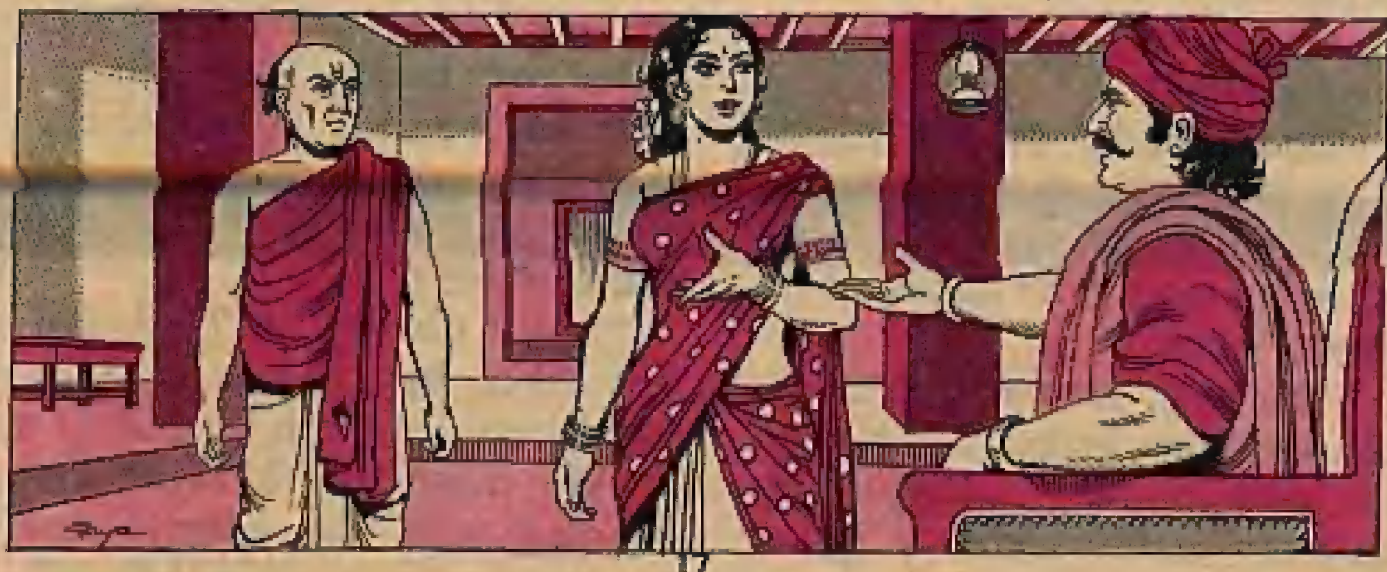
The stranger smiled back and took note of Manasi's address.

"Well, my daughter, I really fail to understand how you find this bridegroom to be the right match for you!" observed Shivshekhar when they were back at

home.

"Father, will a lame beggar ever declare his weaknesses and seek marriage? Don't you realise that the bridegroom is the young king of Kashi? Who else can be declared as a unique bridegroom? A King cannot thrive without the support of *dharma*. He remains unmindful of his household because a hundred problems of the kingdom worry him. He does not do anything without the counsel of his ministers. He has to bear the burden of his crown. Just as the cloud rains on the poor and the rich alike, he has to give justice to all alike," explained Manasi.

She proved correct before long. The king's ministers met Shivshekhar to finalise the arrangements for Manasi's marriage with the king.



The Prince

and the WIZARD

[The tyrant Samser plunders an innocent crowd which had gathered behind the palace to enjoy the performance by a troupe of street-singers. Samser also deprives a traveller of his fine horse. Suddenly, in a daring move, Badal locks up Samser and his soldiers and restores to the people their lost property. The incident shocks King Bhuvansingh. Although he knew that Samser's conduct had been foolish, he could not allow Badal, the mysterious young man, to go unpunished. The Royal detectives are set to trace Badal's hideout.]

7

It was midnight. The hills and the forest lay enchanted under a pale moon. Once in a while was heard the cry of a creature preyed upon by a bigger beast.

All was quiet around the cluster of huts and caves which sheltered the rebel young men who were preparing to avenge the murder of their fathers and grandfathers in the cruel hands of King Bhuvansingh's father, Raghavsingh.

"Badal, Badal, do you hear?"

Ramu gave a shake to Badal. Badal sat up on his bed. "What is the matter?" he asked in a sleepy voice.

"Our dog that keeps guard on the mountain barked out loudly, but next moment, after a piercing cry, it fell silent. Is it not unnatural?"

"It is!" said Badal as he sprang up and picked up his sword.

"There is only one explanation. The dog has been killed. The question is, who killed it—beast or man," observed Badal looking out through the window.

But they were not to remain uncertain for long. Suddenly a rough voice yelled out, "I am the king's commander speaking. Listen, you bandits! My soldiers have surrounded your hiding. Nobody can escape. Come out to the open without your arms, and surrender!"

"What do we do?" Badal was asked by a dozen anxious youths pressing into his hut.

"We must try to avoid encounter with the enemy, unprepared as we are," said Badal.

"Then, do we surrender?" demanded one.

"Never!" replied Badal, raising his sword. "You know the tunnels and the ravines of this difficult region better than the enemy. You should be able to make good your escape for the time being."

"But they are large in number and they have surrounded the region. If we come with them face to face?" asked a young man.

"Fight unto death!" was Badal's grim reply.

At once they dispersed.

"The bandits are escaping!" shouted some soldiers.

"Cut them down!" was their

commander's order.

Next moment the silence of the forest was shattered to shreds by shouts and counter-shouts and the clatter of the clashing swords. The king's soldiers, unable to check the young men from escaping, began putting fire to the huts. They were desperate in their assault. Badal observed them for a moment. Then, with an awe-inspiring cry, he jumped into their midst. In the dazzling light of the burning huts, his moving sword looked like flashes of lightning. The panic-struck soldiers retreated.

"This one is the leader. Do not forget, soldiers, that a huge





reward awaits us if we can capture this fellow!" the commander tried to inspire his soldiers.

"Here is your ready reward!" shouted back Badal charging with his sword. The commander fell down with a prolonged cry and lay still.

There were cries of horror among the soldiers. Thoroughly demoralised, their chief concern now was to get out of the situation.

"Badal, Badal, do you see that hut going in flames? That is Master's!" said Ramu in an anxious voice.

"Keep on chasing away these

dogs. Let me see if the Master is safe," said Badal and he raced towards the hut.

Before him collapsed a part of the hut which was entirely engulfed in flames and smoke. Badal looked around. No, Master had not been able to come out of the hut. He could hear a moan from within the hut. He looked towards the sky for a second as if in silent prayer. Then, he braved into the hut at a lightning speed and came out the next moment, with the old man on his shoulder. While his left hand held the rescued Master tight, with the sword in his right hand he barred the burning door from falling upon him.

"Ramu! Find me near the spring after you have finished with these despicable slaves!" "Badal shouted out as he advanced towards a precipice. A couple of soldiers, still hopeful of capturing him, pounced upon him as he crouched in the darkness for a cautious descent. Little did the poor fellows know about the dangerous nature of the slope leading into a fathomless lake below. Badal ducked and turned them turtle with his sword. The two soldiers rolled down, down, down, till was

heard a splashing sound far below.

Badal climbed down cautiously. At the middle of the slope was a wide slab of stone beside which was a spring streaming headlong into the lake.

Badal laid down the old man on the slab. He had swooned away. Badal sprinkled the spring water on his face.

"Master!" he called softly. There was no response. He looked for a plant the leaves of which helped in recovering one's sense. But it was not possible to distinguish one plant from another in the dark. He sat, silently looking at the bushes

overhead which reflected the glare of the burning huts. But the glare was growing faint. The shouts of the invaders were heard no more.

With a torch of dry twigs in hand, Ramu found his way to the slab.

"Those not killed are kicked off," he informed Badal.

"But how many lives from our side have been sacrificed?" Badal asked gravely.

"Don't know yet; perhaps none," replied Ramu.

"Don't say so. We have perhaps lost the most valuable life," said Badal with a sigh.

"Is Master dead?" Ramu cried out.



"Not yet, but numbered are my moments." The faint voice was Master's.

"Great is the glory of Lord, Master, that He has given you back to us!" Badal spoke with joy.

"Not for long, Badal, the Lord has given me only time enough to tell you two things. Do not rest till your mission is achieved. And, secondly, it is time you know who you really are. It is with your safety in mind that I had not divulged your identity. You are not just one of the descendants of the noblemen who gave their lives for the rightful king of this land, Veersingh. You are King Veersingh's grandson. Had not Bhuvansingh's father treacherously usurped the kingdom, you would have by now known as the crown prince. Along with your grandfather, your parents died in the hands of the enemy. I, the king's minister, escaped with you—then an infant!"

The old man's voice grew more and more feeble. Ramu fetched water in his palms and put it into his mouth. But it was of no use. Master was no more.

Badal sat speechless. All was quiet again, except for the howl of a skulk of jackals on the other side of the gorge.

Contd.



"The enemy's fort has fallen!" shouted the jubilant Maratha soldiers. "Victory to our master King Sivaji!"

This was at Kalyan. The ruler of the state, Mulan Ahmed, was taken prisoner by Sivaji's brave lieutenant, Abaji Sondev.

But Abaji had taken another notable prisoner too. She was the fallen ruler's daughter, the beautiful princess.

"The princess will make a befitting gift for my master, Sivaji" he thought.

And duly was the princess presented to Sivaji. The bea-

ming king looked at the captive princess. Then he said, "I wish, my mother were as beautiful as this princess. That would have made me a little more handsome!"

Next, he arranged for maids and bodyguards to escort the princess to her home.

To the people around, he then said, "If I am truly a king, then all my subjects are my children!" Looking at his lieutenants, he said, "Never forget that even a monarch as powerful as Ravana perished because of his lust!"

Abaji Sondev, who had so





proudly brought the princess to his master, was perhaps disappointed. Sivaji understood his feeling. With a pat on his back, he said, "You see me as a ruler, a king. But I see myself as a *Sanyasi*, an ascetic. It is at my guru's order that I am devoting my strength and time to serve the motherland, to protect the people and their dharma from the tyranny of cruel bigots. If my guru would have asked me to roam about with a begging bowl, I would have done so gladly."

Who was this guru whom the great Sivaji held in so high esteem? He was Ramdas.

What Sivaji said was literally true. Once Ramdas stood before a villager's house and asked for alms. Sivaji, who was in an adjoining house, could hear the saint's voice. Instantly he prepared a document and put his seal to it and rushing out to the street, put it in the saint's bowl. He had given away his kingdom, his wealth, and all he had, to Ramdas! That is what the document declared.

Ramdas knew that Sivaji, in his heart, yearned to become an ascetic. But the saint also knew that Sivaji had to fulfil a mission. None else was fit for that.

"Are you ready to do whatever I ask you to do?" asked Ramdas.

"Yes, Master. I have given up everything to you—myself included. I am totally at your disposal," replied Sivaji.

"Very good. I ask you to continue in your present mission. Rule the land as my representative," was the guru's order.

Ramdas was not only a saint, but also a great patriot. He was born in 1627 in a village named Jambava on the bank of the Godavari. Even as a child his thoughts were with God and

the motherland. He felt that the people had forgotten God, the true source of all strength. That is why they were incapable of combating the adversary who took great pleasure in destroying the age-old temples and seats of culture. In Sivaji he found a true believer who had the capacity to inspire and organise the people against the forces of barbarism. In Ramdas Sivaji found a saint who was ready to use his spiritual wisdom for the benefit of the people.

When, as a child, Ramdas showed signs of otherworldliness, his mother and elder brother arranged for his marriage. That will bind him to the world—they thought. The

marriage was about to be performed. The priest, while pouring holy water into the young bridegroom's palms, said, "Take care!" All that the priest meant was for the boy to be careful enough not to let the water leak through his fingers. But the priest's caution assumed quite different meaning for the boy. To him, it was a warning from Providence not to fall into the trap of an ordinary life.

At once the boy started running. His relatives, at first startled, pursued him, but they could not catch him.

The boy abandoned his family name and took the name Ramdas—Lord Rama's servant.

He wandered from place to place and visited the Himalayas



too. But it was not the physical wandering, but his ardent aspiration to serve the motherland through God-realisation that brought him enlightenment.

He preached to the people the value of devotion to Rama. At the same time, he exhorted them to be as valiant and as faithful servants of the Lord as Hanuman. He composed sweet lyrics singing the glory of Rama which were compiled in a volume, *Dasabodha*. As he wandered through Maharashtra, thousands felt attracted to him.

His message attracted Sivaji. He sent message after message to Ramdas seeking to meet him. Ramdas, however, evaded him for a long time. Once Sivaji reached Chaphal where he knew

Ramdas to be camping. But when he arrived there, the saint was not to be found!

This time Sivaji was determined not to give up. He refused to have food until he had met the saint. And soon the saint was seen sitting under a tree.

At last they met—the hero and the seer. This meeting changed the course of history. Sivaji's determination to fight against the tyrants received the saint's sanction. From that moment onward it was Ramdas who was for the hero the fountain of courage.

Ramdas left his body in 1680, soon after the death of his dear disciple, Sivaji.



BRIDEGROOM MEETS THE BRIDE

In a certain village there was a girl who was as talkative as she was foolish in her talk.

In the neighbouring village lived a landlord who had a young son who was as timid as he was foolish in his apprehensions.

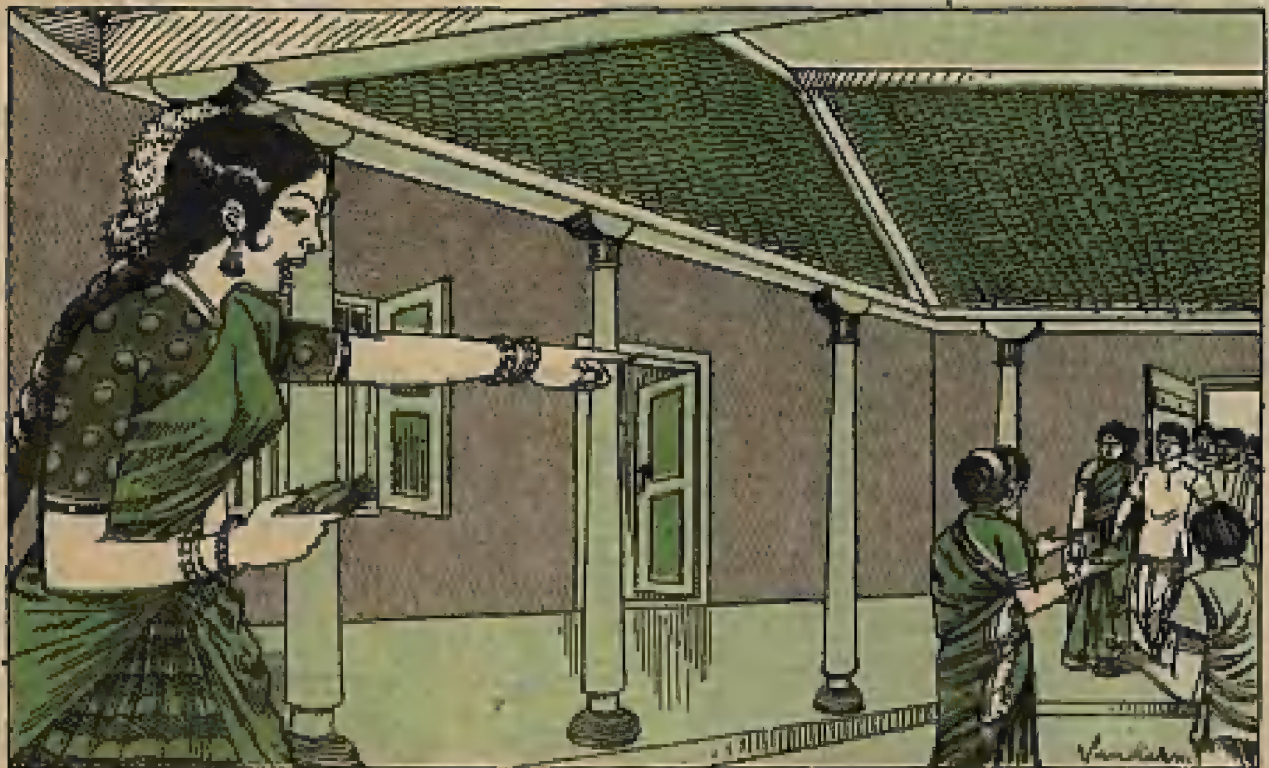
There was a proposal for the two to marry. The bridegroom came to see the bride.

In order to stop the bride from talking in the bridegroom's presence her mother gave her a betel-nut and said, "Put it into your mouth as soon as the bridegroom comes in. Begin chewing it when he sits down."

As soon as the bridegroom approached, the bride asked her mother loudly, "Here comes he. Should I put the thing into my mouth?"

The bridegroom looked nervous. As soon as he took seat, the bride asked, "Mother, here he sits, should I begin chewing?"

The bridegroom looked pale. He stood up and ran away.





*New Tales of King Vikram,
and the Vampire*

STRANGE STORY OF PADMAJA

Dark was the night and fearful, the atmosphere. It drizzled continuously. Flashes of lightning revealed weird faces and thunder shook the earth. But King Vikram did not swerve. He brought down the corpse that hung atop the tree and began crossing the cremation ground, with the corpse lying on his shoulder.

Suddenly the vampire that possessed the corpse said, "O King, you are no doubt brave. But it is dangerous to play with supernatural beings as you are doing. Have you heard the story of Padmaja? Let me narrate it to you."

The vampire went on with his narration: Padmaja was the daughter of a wealthy man. She was extremely beautiful and intelligent. But she was equally proud. When she came of age,

her parents began to entertain proposals for her marriage. But she would dismiss all the proposals with an arrogant gesture.

Time passed. No more proposals came. One day, the sad mother of Padmaja told her "I am afraid, henceforth nobody would come forward to seek your hand in marriage!"

Annoyed, Padmaja retorted, "Well, well, the messenger of death will come!"

At midnight suddenly Padmaja felt someone touching her. She opened her eyes and saw a handsome young man standing by her bedside.

"I have come," he said. Padmaja felt too scared to shriek. She looked on helpless.

"Come with me, for we should marry," said the grim young man again. But Padmaja lay speechless.

"All right. Take time to make up your mind. I will come again," said the young man and he left.

Padmaja came out to the veranda tiptoe and watched. After leaving her house, the young man entered a neighbouring house and went out in a minute. But his leaving the house was followed by several voices crying inside the house.



Someone had died.

Padmaja was left in no doubt about the fact that the young man was a messenger of death.

A few days later the young man woke up Padmaja again and asked, "Are you ready to accompany me for marrying me?"

Padmaja felt her blood going cold. She kept quiet.

The young man waited for a minute. Then, in a grim voice he said, "If you do not oblige me, your father shall die within a week."

Padmaja still kept quiet. The young man left.

Padmaja's father died before

the turn of the week. Padmaja considered herself to be the cause of her father's death. She wept bitterly; but she could not pass a word to anybody about her strange experience with the messenger of death.

A few more days passed. Again, one night, Padmaja was woken up by the young man who demanded, "Will you accompany me now?" Upon Padmaja keeping quiet, he said, "It seems you are still not prepared to meet my demand. Very well, be sure, your mother shall die within a week!" He then left in a huff.

His words proved true. Pad-

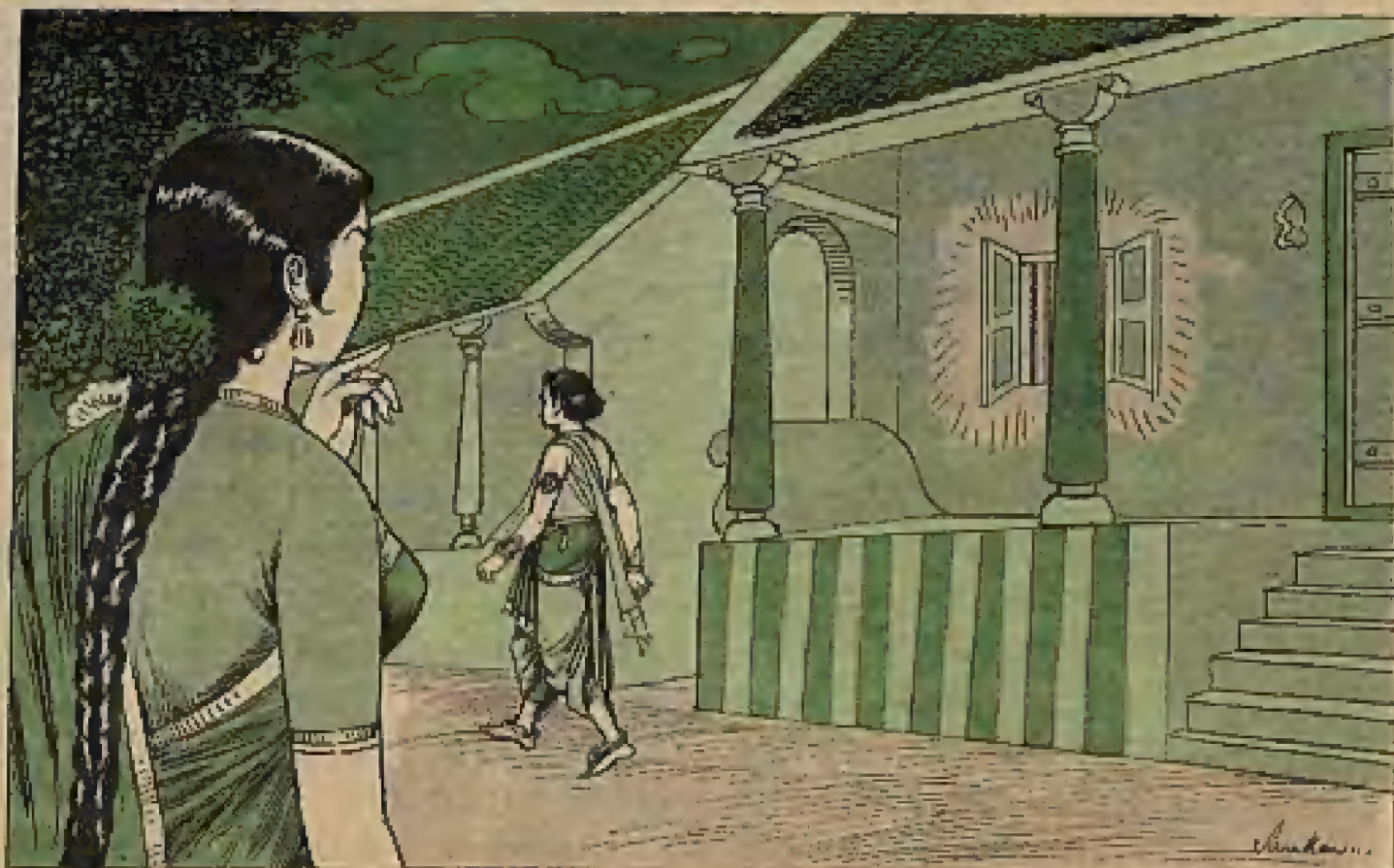
maja's mother died before the week was out.

Thereafter Padmaja hardly left her bed. A fortnight later the young man appeared before her again one night and asked, "Are you ready to marry me now?"

"No!" answered Padmaja. She had no more fear for the messenger of death, because, in her despair, she desired death for herself.

"In that case you shall die!" threatened the young man.

"I don't care," replied Padmaja. The young man stood simmering in anger. It was found in the morning that



Padmaja was dead. Her relatives buried her deadbody in a nearby burial ground.

A month passed. The prince of the land was passing by the burial ground. He was attracted by a magnificent flower blooming on a grave. Although his bodyguards cautioned him saying that it was not right to pluck flowers from the graves, the prince plucked it and was charmed by its beauty and fragrance.

He carried it home and put it in a vase which he kept on a table near his bed. There was also a glass of water on the table. At midnight the prince

woke up and desired to drink the water; but to his utter surprise he saw the glass empty.

This was repeated during the three subsequent nights. Very much intrigued, on the fourth night the prince feigned sleep, but kept awake. A little before midnight, he heard a faint rustling sound. He opened his eyes slightly and, to his great amazement, saw a beautiful girl emerging from the flower.

As soon as the girl began drinking the water, the prince took hold of her and demanded to know who she was.

"I am Padmaja," declared the girl, on the verge of weeping.



Being questioned by the affectionate prince, she narrated her woes. The prince and his parents were very happy with the girl. After a few days the prince married Padmaja.

The vampire paused and then demanded of King Vikram, "Why was poor Padmaja made to go through a series of fearful experiences? Why did not the messenger of death marry her? How, once dead, did Padmaja come back to life? O King, answer these questions if you can. Your head would roll off your shoulder if you keep mum despite your knowledge of the answers."

At once replied the king: "Padmaja had many virtues, but she was proud. The series of experiences shattered her pride and made her humble. The messenger of death was a super-

natural being and he could not have married a human bride. But such beings are often beset with human desires. So, was the messenger of death. Under no circumstance could he have satisfied his desire. To your third question, my answer is, it had been time for Padmaja's parents to die. The messenger of death did not really kill them. He only prophesied their death. But so far as Padmaja was concerned, it was not time for her to die. Providence brought her back to life through the love of the prince. The messenger of death had no power to take away anybody's life until the time for him or her had come."

No sooner had the king concluded his reply than the vampire, along with the corpse, gave him the slip!



THE REHEARSAL

A certain raja employed a new washerman in his service. One morning he told a palace guard to summon the washerman urgently.

The guard, on reaching the washerman's hut, heard him talking to his donkey. Bewildered, the guard called a colleague of his. Both went closer and heard what the washerman was saying to his donkey:

"Your Highness, I have put a heavy burden on your back. Pardon me, my king, my patron! If you, my lord, get annoyed with this humble creature, who will take pity on me? I am your slave!"

The guards informed the raja that the washerman had gone mad!

But the raja called the washerman and talked to him and found that he was quite normal. Surprised, he asked him, "Were you talking to your donkey with great humility?"

"Your Highness, that is right. I was practising humility in order to be able to talk to you in the proper manner. Pardon me, my king, my patron. If you, my lord, get annoyed with this humble creature, who will take pity on me? I am your slave!"





THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

Antonio, the noble merchant of Venice, has a friend, Bassanio. At Belmont lives a charming young lady, Portia. Her father has left her vast wealth—and a strange condition for choosing her husband. In fact, it is the suitor who must choose the right one of three caskets, the one containing Portia's portrait, to win her.

Bassanio desires to try his luck. But he must visit Portia in style for which money is needed. Bassanio approaches Antonio for a loan.

Antonio's ships are abroad. But he can very well borrow the amount from a rich though awfully cruel money-lender, Shylock.

Shylock is delighted. He makes a proposal in "merry sport." If Antonio cannot pay back the loan on time, he shall forfeit a pound of his flesh. Antonio agrees to the condition.

Bassanio is lucky. He chooses the right casket. No less lucky

is his companion, Gratiano, who has won the love of Portia's maid, Nerissa.

In the meanwhile, Shylock's daughter, Jessica, fed up with her father's meanness, elopes with Lorenzo, a friend of Bassanio. The couple finds shelter in Portia's house.

But soon news reaches them that Antonio's ships have failed to turn up. Unable to pay Shylock's money, he is faced with the alternative which is to give a pound of his flesh.

After a quickly conducted marriage, Bassanio hurries to his friend's rescue, accompanied by Gratiano. The trial begins before the duke of Venice. Suddenly a young lawyer, with an assistant, appears in the scene. The charmed duke requests the lawyer to judge the case.

The lawyer at first admits that Shylock is justified in claiming his pound of flesh. But then, to a happy Shylock, 'he' requests to forego his claim and go

satisfied with thrice the sum which Bassanio can now offer, he being the wealthy Portia's husband.

But Shylock would not agree. He is ready with his knife.



Only then does the lawyer warn him that he can take the flesh provided he does not shed a drop of blood—an impossible condition.

Shylock is willing to have the money instead of the flesh. But it is too late. He must even forfeit his property for plotting to kill Antonio!

However, he makes a deed bestowing his property on his son and daughter and goes out a broken-hearted man.

The lawyer and 'his' assistant would not accept any fee, but would like to have the rings from Bassanio and Gratiano which their newly wed wives had given them.

Back at Portia's house, Bassanio and Gratiano are asked by their wives to produce the rings. They can't. Is a crisis imminent? No, for the lawyer and 'his' clerk were Portia and Nerissa in disguise, after all!

And, to crown the episode with joy, Antonio's ships return safe!

The Merchant of Venice is among Shakespeare's most popular comedies.



Windfall for the Forgetful

The husband was haughty; the wife was forgetful. A day did not pass without the wife, Sati, committing some blunder and the husband, Madhav, rebuking her.

"I am going to Joshpur; shall not be back before evening. Do not expect me for lunch," Madhav informed Sati one morning before leaving home.

Late in the afternoon Sati paid a visit to Lakshmi's house a mile away. The two friends met after several months. Lakshmi's husband too was away. They remained engrossed in gossip. They had an early dinner together. Then Sati said that it was time for her to go home and cook the

dinner for her husband.

"Let us chitchat for that much of time which you propose to devote to cooking. You can carry some food from my kitchen. There is enough left," said Lakshmi.

The two friends sat down again and forgot the time.

Madhav returned home in the early part of the night. He felt disgusted to see the house locked. He strolled before the house for a long time and once or twice went behind it to see if by any chance the door at the back had been left open by Sati. But, at least once Sati was found to have been careful enough to lock both the doors.

A thief watched Madhav moving about in a suspicious manner. He concluded that Madhav too belonged to his brotherhood. He came out from his hiding and whispered to Madhav, "My friend, I know why you are hesitating to do the needful. It is because you are alone. But here am I ready to co-operate. You keep guard here. I will open the lock with my master key and see if there is anything valuable inside."

Madhav was about to grab the fellow. But, on second thought, he decided to play safe.

"But do not escape with all the booty. You must give me

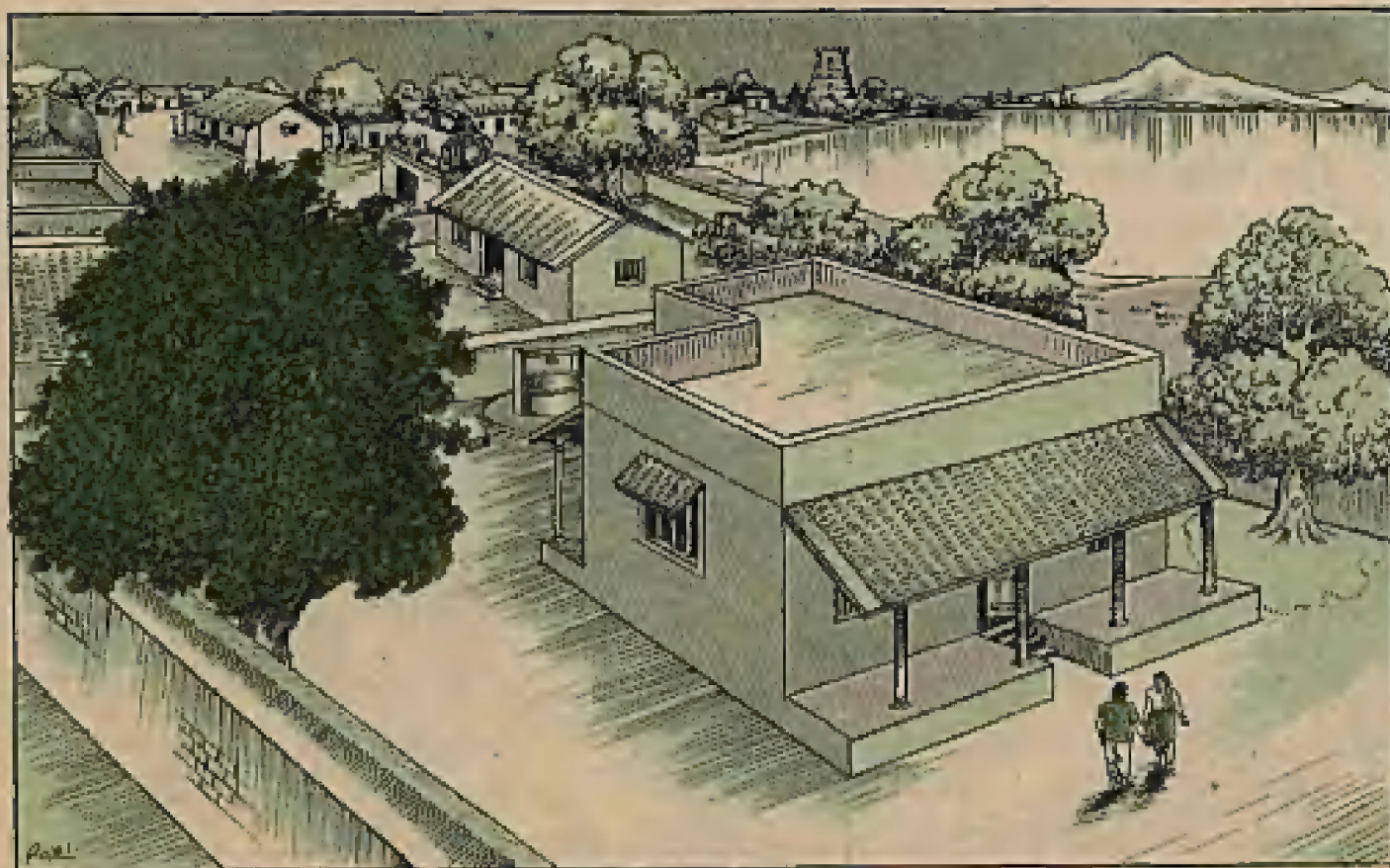
half," he said.

"I promise to do so," said the thief. Soon he succeeded in opening the lock. He entered Madhav's bedroom and started handling the boxes.

Madhav shut the room from outside and locked it promptly.

"You must burgle my house with my co-operation, must you? Now, fellow, I will break your head if you break a single thing. Wait till it is morning," Madhav shouted into the room through the window.

The thief was stunned. He pleaded with Madhav to be set free. But Madhav had no reason to oblige him.



Tired that he was, Madhav fell asleep in another room. It was midnight when Sati realised that she had been quite late at her friend's house. She hurried back home and was surprised to see that the main door lay open. Looking in, she found the bedroom locked.

"Woe to me! I locked the bedroom instead of the main door!" she took herself to task for her negligent conduct. She opened the bedroom.

Like an arrow the imprisoned thief ran away. The sound woke up Madhav. Looking at the perplexed Sati, he seethed in anger, but not for long. Soon his eyes fell on a bag left by the thief in his anxiety to make good his escape.

The bag was full of glittering gold mohurs.

The thief had managed to pick it up from a tavern, from a party of drunken officers of the king. The wealth was on its way to the royal treasury.

The thief was under the impression that the bag contained ordinary coins. Had he known that they were gold mohurs, he would not have cared to go burgling another house!

As soon as it was morning Madhav started for the king's court. The king was so happy to receive the bag that he made a gift of the whole thing to Madhav.

"Had you not forgotten the time, the episode with the thief would not have taken place and we could not have grown richer by a bagful of gold mohurs!" Madhav told his wife time and again. He was no more an angry man.





LEGENDS AND PARABLES OF INDIA

WHY THE SAGE KEPT SILENT

Beside a forest lived a sage. One morning a traveller asked him, "I wish to go to the village on the other side of the river. Which one is the better route - the one that goes through the forest or the one which goes by the border of the forest?"

The sage kept quiet. The traveller repeated his question several times, but he did not succeed in eliciting any reply from the sage.

"You fool!" shouted the traveller and he went away.

He soon met on the way a mahout who rode an elephant.

"O mahout, can you tell me the right way to the village beyond the hill?" asked the traveller.

"Do you see that narrow

track? Follow that. Go up straight by that tall tree on the bank of the river and you will find the village," answered the mahout.

"Thanks, brother, for giving me the necessary direction. I asked this question to the fellow over there several times, but he would not speak, the fool that he was!" blurted out the traveller and he proceeded along the track pointed out by the mahout.

But the mahout felt intrigued. The man of whom the traveller spoke so despisingly was known to the mahout as a sage. He was well known for his wisdom. Many people came to him for his advice. And the traveller says that he was a fool!

While musing on this the mahout came near the sage's hut. He got off his elephant and greeted the sage and asked him, "Why did you not answer the simple question put to you by a traveller a little while ago?"

"Never mind that. That is none of your business," said the sage.

But the mahout insisted on knowing the reason for the sage's unusual conduct towards the traveller. At last, explained the sage, "The traveller was such a fool that he would not have understood properly even as simple a direction as the way to a village. He would have acted wrongly on my

advice and would have blamed me later."

The mahout got curious. He turned his elephant and went back to see whether the traveller had followed his direction properly or not.

Half an hour later, when the mahout approached the tall tree on the river-bank, he heard an angry voice, "Look here, you fool, what has happened to me because I followed your direction!"

The mahout, to his utter surprise, saw the traveller hanging from the top branch of the tree. He held on to the branch with both his hands, but the branch,



on account of his weight, had leaned down. Below was the river. The traveller's legs dangled a few feet above the strong current.

"You asked me to go up by this tree. I climbed it following your suggestion honestly. I found no way after I reached its top. I would have fallen to my death had I not been clever enough to hold on to this branch! Now, would you drive your elephant into the river and let me descend on your shoulder?" asked the traveller.

The mahout could not have left the fellow hanging in that fashion. He drove the elephant into the river. But, no sooner had he come under the leaning branch than the elephant, suddenly scared of the current below, ran fast to the other side. The mahout had just caught hold of the traveller's dangling feet in order to help him descend on his shoulder. Now, holding on to the traveller's feet, the mahout too remained suspended over the river.

"You are a real fool. Not only you give wrong advice to others, you can't even keep your own elephant under control!" ranted the traveller.

"Yes, my friend, I am a



fool," agreed the mahout in a sad voice.

"Now, let us shout for help," proposed the traveller.

"The only risk in shouting is, the passers-by who hear us may think that we are attacked either by bandits or by a tiger. They might decide to keep off us," said the mahout.

"In that case, let us sing. Do you know the art of music?" asked the traveller.

"Even if I knew, I am hardly in a mood to sing in this condition," murmured the mahout.

"Then let me sing," said the traveller and he began singing. It was a horrible experience for the mahout to bear the fellow's shrieks, over and above the experience of hanging from his feet.

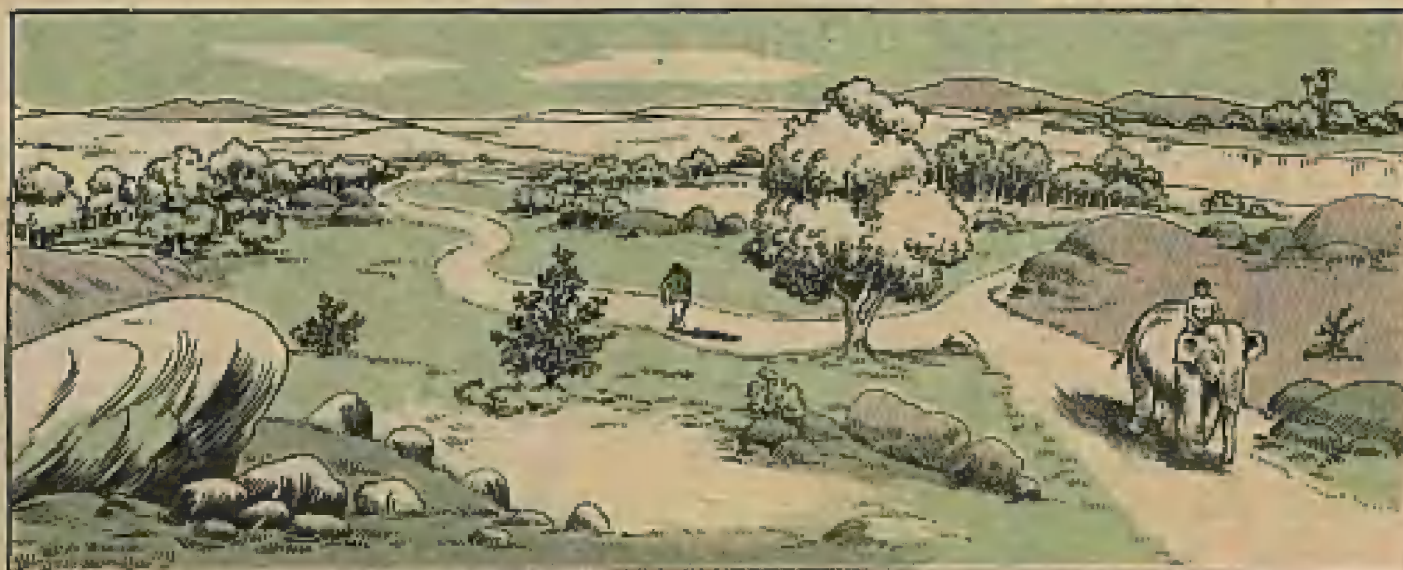
The traveller, upon ending his song, demanded, "Don't you

know etiquette? Is it not the custom to show appreciation of a good singer by clapping hands like this?"

As the traveller tried to demonstrate how to clap, he fell down into the river along with the mahout.

Both had to struggle hard to come ashore. After recovering breath, the traveller said, "This is a strange world where people keep on doing things so foolishly! I better go back home."

The mahout felt like saying, "Yes, it is a strange world for a clever man like you," but he had no courage to make any comment. He looked for his elephant and when he found it, he crossed the river at a safe point and returned to the sage's hut. He silently prostrated himself to the sage and took to the road again.





VEER HANUMAN

On their way back to Ayodhya, Rama and his party met Anjana, Hanuman's mother, who lived on Mount Gandhamadan. Hanuman stayed on with his mother; others left for Ayodhya.

"O Mother Sita! It is your Grace that saved us. I had the divine privilege to behold the presence of Rama and yourself inside Hanuman's heart. That has been an unforgettable experience," said Yasodhara.

"Indeed, mother, wonderful was that scene," agreed the little prince Chandragada and the princess, Chandramukhi.

Sita looked at the children with deep affection in her eyes. Said Yasodhara, "O Sita, I have an impression that very soon you are going to be a mother."

Thus they continued to ex-

change many happy and sweet observations till they arrived in Ayodhya. Even thereafter King Yayati and Queen Yasodhara, along with their two children, remained there for several days, enjoying Rama's hospitality. Sita loved to see the two children play.

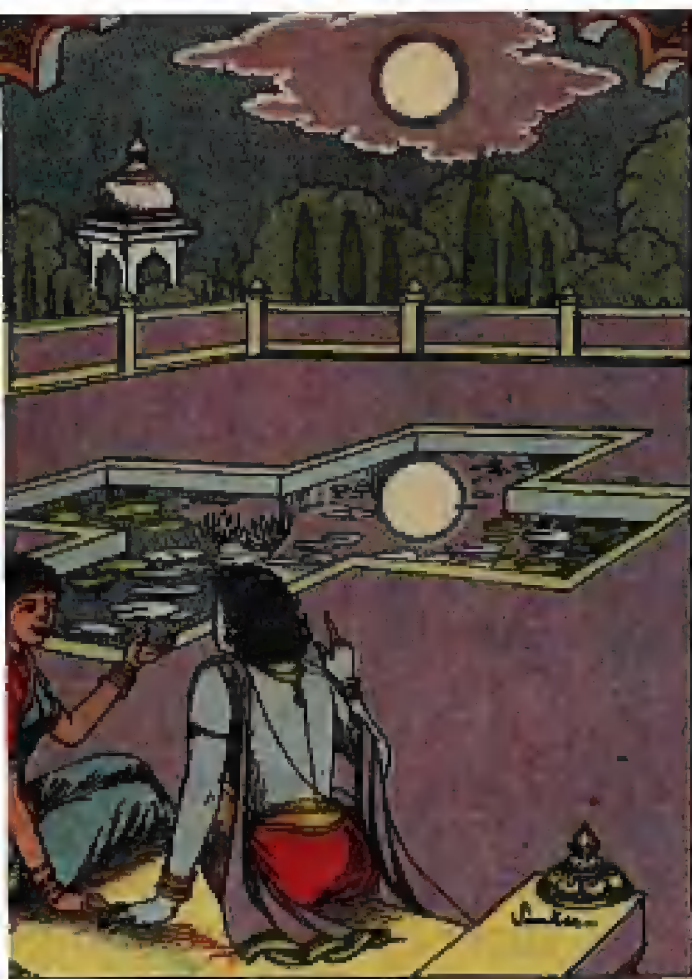
After spending a happy period in Ayodhya, Yayati and his family left for their home.

One evening Rama and Sita sat in the royal garden, enjoying a glorious moonrise.

"It is a magnificent *Chandra* (moon) rising in the east," observed Rama.

"Equally magnificent is the *Chandra*, Ramachandra, who has arisen of Mother Kausalya," remarked Sita.

"A new moonrise is going to



take place. This time the eastern horizon is Sita," said Rama.

"But the new *Chandra* will be like the magnificent one already there, who is Ramachandra," said Sita.

"No. The new moon will be like Sita," said Rama.

Both laughed. Two lilies were swaying in the pond. They gazed at the flowers for some time and then retired.

Sita visited the garden again at night to observe the two flowers in the moonlight. They glittered like stars. Sita was fascinated by them.

Hanuman sat engrossed on Mount Gandhamadan in meditation. He was not conscious

of the fast passage of time. One day an old friend of his named Bhadra came from Ayodhya to meet him.

"Hanuman! Rama desires your presence at Ayodhya," he said. Bhadra looked sad.

"I am afraid, you bear some ominous news. Come on, dear friend, make a clean breast of everything," pleaded Hanuman.

"Well, Hanuman, whatever ominous was to befall has befallen," said Bhadra with a sigh and then he reported in brief all that had happened:

One day a delegation of Brahmins met Rama and told him that it was forbidden for anybody who had not undergone a regular initiation to read and interpret the Vedas. But that is what a man named Shambhuka had done. One had to be eligible, through a strenuous discipline, to handle the scriptures. But Shambhuka had violated all codes of conduct and had made wrong use of the scriptures. The sacrilege has polluted the purity of the atmosphere. As a result, a Brahmin's child has died. Such an untimely death was unusual. Rama ought to punish Shambhuka with death.

Misuse of the Vedas was

among the most serious of sins. Shambhuka had to be put to death. His wife, while dying herself, cried out, "O King, some grave crisis is about to visit you. What you have just done signals that."

A few days later Rama and Bhadra, in disguise, were roaming about in the kingdom for a first hand knowledge of the condition of the people. They came across a highly agitated couple in a village on the outskirts of the city. The woman had lived somewhere away from her husband's house for some days. Upon her return, her husband not only refused to accept her, but also gave her a beating.

"What, King Rama had no hesitation in accepting his wife who lived for several days in the castle of the demons! But you must cast aspersion on my conduct! You consider yourself wiser than Rama, do you?" protested the woman.

"Rama being the king was under the impression that he could do whatever he liked. But I am not out of my mind as he is!" retorted the drunken man.

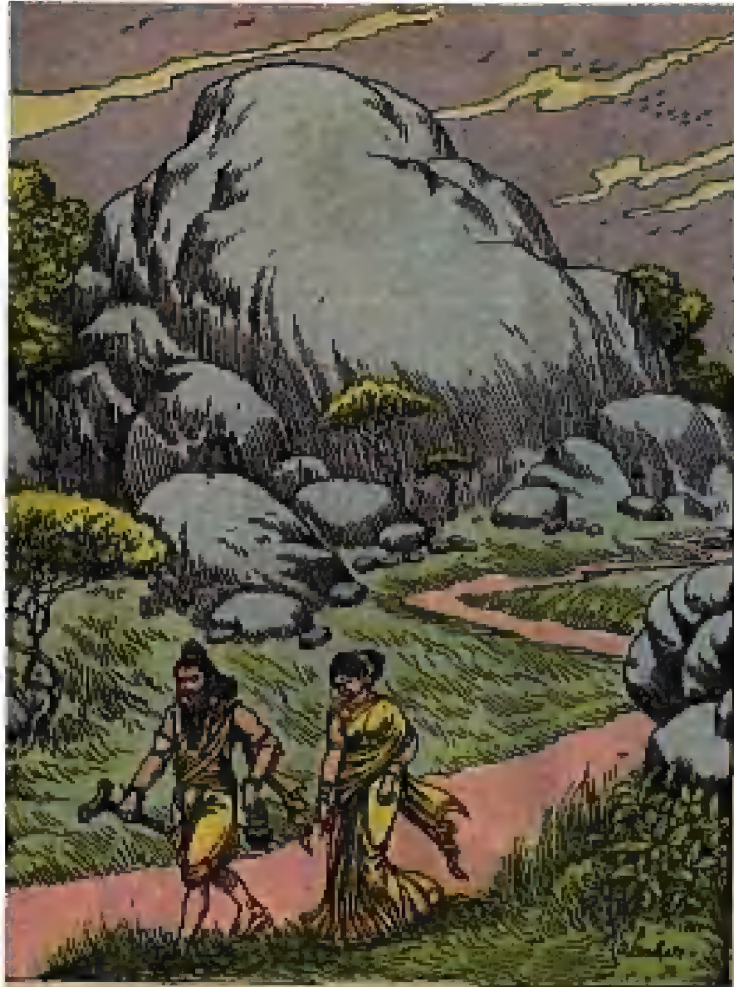
Rama returned to his palace, grave and sad. He summoned Lakshmana and instructed him



to lead Sita into the forest and to return without her! The reluctant Lakshmana was obliged to do as asked by his brother. Sita, who was then pregnant, had expressed a desire to pass some days in the company of the wives of the sages living in the forest. Lakshmana, under the plea of fulfilling that desire of Sita, drove her into the forest in a chariot and returned alone!

After Sita was abandoned in the forest, Rama hardly slept or ate. He grew weaker day by day.

Bhadra felt extremely distressed at Rama's plight. He found himself in the grip of a strong desire to punish the



fellow whose stupid comment had brought about this sad situation. He marched to the village. But on reaching the village he learnt that the villagers, incensed at the comments made by that quarrelsome couple on Rama and Sita, were ready to punish them when the couple slipped away. Nobody knew where they went; nobody even knew from where they had come to dwell there for a short period.

When Sita realised that she had been deserted, she decided to put an end to her life by jumping into a river from a rock. But, as was ordained, Valmiki, the great sage, happened to see her in time. He per-

suaded her to desist from what she was about to do and led her to his Ashram.

It was in the sublime and serene atmosphere of the Ashram of the sage that Sita gave birth to her twin sons whom Valmiki named Lava and Kusha. The great sage took it upon himself to instruct the boys. He was then in the process of composing the epic, Ramayana. The two boys learnt to recite the verses with great feeling. From their mother they learnt the science of warfare, particularly archery.

One day, while singing the verses from the Ramayana, the two boys proceeded towards Ayodhya. They had grown curious to see Rama of whom they had learnt so much. They did not know that the Sita of the Ramayana was the same Sita who was their mother.

In order to divert Rama's mind from his sorrows, his well-wishers including Vasishta, the guru, had organised the *Aswamedha Yajna*. As it was necessary for the queen to be by the side of the king when the *Yajna* was performed, they had got an image of Sita made in gold to be placed beside Rama.

The *Yajna* was about to commence when Lava and Kusha entered the city, singing. They were first seen by Lakshmana. He was charmed. Bestowing great love on the boys, he led them into the palace.

When the two boys sang the episode concerning Sita entering the fire in order to prove her purity, after she had been rescued from Ravana's fort, all the listeners, including the women of the palace, wept. All stood bowing their heads before the golden image of Sita. Rama, who took the boys to be the children of the sages, embraced them and heaped gifts on them. The boys left for their dwelling.

After the preliminary phase of the *Yajna*, the horse selected for the occasion was released. The horse bore on its back the standard of the Solar Dynasty of Raghu, depicting the sun. Detaining that horse would amount to challenging Rama's supremacy. No hero, no king would have dared to do that.

But when the horse entered the forest, Lava and Kusha captured it. Lakshmana, Bharata, and Shatrughna who escorted the horse had to put up resistance, but they fell to the arrows from the two young



boys.

The news startled Rama. He hurried to the spot and challenged the boys to a fight. The twins remembered their mother and discharged their arrows at Rama. Instantly Rama swooned away.

Sita came rushing to the scene and nursed Rama back to sense.

Rama now understood who the two boys were. Great was his joy. He rejoiced no less at meeting Sita. Valmiki advised him to take Sita back to the palace. Rama agreed to do so, but proposed that Sita prove her purity once more before the people of Ayodhya.

Sita, in due course, reached

Rama's court with her two sons. She asked Rama to take charge of the boys. Then, most unexpectedly, she exclaimed, "Let the Mother Earth divide and receive me. That is how I wish to prove my purity!"

Suddenly the earth shook. The sky grew dark. People of Ayodhya came rushing and stood before Sita with their hands folded. The earth under Sita's feet cracked. Out of it emerged Bhudevi—the incarnation of Mother Earth. Around her were seen the serpent-damselfs. Like a mother taking her child into her lap, the goddess took Sita into her embrace.

Before anybody could think of trying to stop her, the goddess along with Sita, disappeared into the earth. There was no trace of the crack.

All stood stunned. Rama

brought out his bow and aimed an arrow at the earth, in order to dig a passage through it. But a heavenly voice forbade him to do so. Rama stood stunned like a statue.

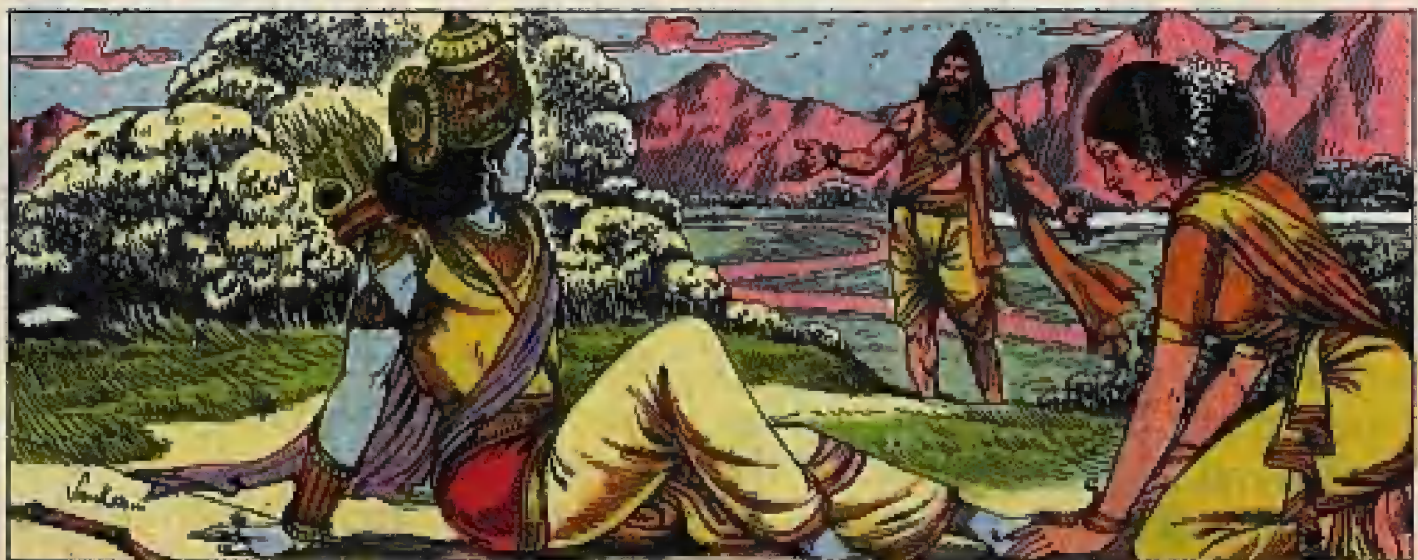
Thereafter it was hard for Rama to concentrate in his royal duties. He asked Lava and Kusha to function as the crown princes and himself withdrew from all activities.

Bhadra, after narrating all this to Hanuman, said, "The horse meant for the *Yajna* is still wandering. It is being followed by Lakshmana, Bharata, Shatrughna, and an army."

Hanuman sat speechless, tears rolling down his cheeks.

Suddenly he stood up and said, "I must forthwith proceed to meet Rama!" With his mace resting on his shoulder, he rose to the sky.

Contd.





THE FATAL CURIOSITY

Kusigarh was a prosperous city. The king was like a father to his subjects.

All was well until a bandit named Gajsingh threatened the peace of the city. He proved clever and merciless in his operation. The king tried his best to capture him, but failed.

As days passed, Gajsingh proved a greater menace. Some of the merchants who came to Kusigarh from faraway kingdoms were waylaid by him. As a result other merchants were afraid of visiting Kusigarh. The trade of the kingdom suffered.

The minister was away on a diplomatic mission. Upon his return he found the king pensive and he heard all about Gajsingh.

"Don't you worry, my lord, I should be able to capture the bandit within two or three days," he assured the king.

And on the third day he produced in the court a strong and stout youth and said, "Here is the notorious bandit, my lord. He had the audacity to enter my house last night. I succeeded in catching him."

"What is your name?" asked the king.

"Gajsingh," replied the youth.

There was great sensation in the courts. The captive youth stood upright and defiant. He looked fearful.

The king sent him to the prison, saying that he was to be

tried the next day.

The court was crowded the next day. The prisoner confessed to his crimes.

"What could be the befitting punishment for this fellow?" the king asked the courtiers.

"Behead him!" "Hang him!" suggested the courtiers.

"My lord, it is true that Gajsingh has done us great harm. But how do we gain by killing him? I suggest that he be spared, upon the condition that he must leave our kingdom and carry on his nefarious activity in the kingdom of our neighbour who is our enemy," proposed the minister.

The king appreciated the proposal. "All right, Gajsingh, go and reside in our enemy territory and harass the king of that land to the best of your ability," he said.

The royal guards left the bandit at the frontier. There was a jungle and a meadow, a No Man's Land between the two kingdoms. The bandit walked alone.

Suddenly a young man sprang up before him and said, "Look here, friend, I am really intrigued by your conduct. I am the true Gajsingh. Who are you really? Why did you assume my name and receive the punishment? I have followed you with great curiosity."

Next moment the king's soldiers who were hiding rushed and captured the real Gajsingh. The fake Gajsingh, who was none other than a nephew of the minister, smiled and said, "We expected you. Now you know why I assumed your name! It is just to arouse this fatal curiosity in you!"



ADVENTURES IN THE FOREST

It was evening when Govind, the young traveller, arrived at a village. The village seemed quite prosperous with a number of well-built houses. But what surprised Govind was that the roads were quite deserted.

He got onto the veranda of a house. He could hear people talking inside the house. But the moment he knocked on the door, all was quiet.

"I am a traveller, seeking shelter. Will you please open the door?" he shouted. But no response came.

He moved on to the next house. Through a small chink on the door he peeped in and found two or three people sitting around a lamp.

"Will you please open the door?" he asked. At once the people around the lamp lay down on the ground as if they were fast asleep. Govind noticed their conduct through



the hole and felt quite perplexed.

On one side of the village stood a deserted temple. Govind spent the night there.

In the morning he found the villagers moving about freely. He asked them why all kept themselves confined to their homes in the previous evening. He was told that for a fortnight past the people were much harassed by some bandits. The bandits looted house after house and if they saw anybody in the open, killed or maimed him. That is why panic set in as soon as it was evening.

Soon Govind observed a large



number of people heading towards the forest that was a mile away from the village. On inquiry he learnt that there was a hermit in the forest who sat in trance for six days of the week. On the seventh day he was willing to see and bless the people.

"Since how long has he been in the forest?" asked Govind.

"For a month or so," replied the villagers. "Before that he was in the Himalayas."

Govind followed the villagers. Soon they were in the forest. Under a huge banian tree sat the hermit, sporting ochre garb, an impressive beard, and a

pyramid of hair on the head. Behind him stood three bearded disciples.

Govind went closer to the hermit. His dog began to snarl at the hermit. Govind knew that his dog was always decent towards innocent people. It snarled or barked only when something was wrong somewhere.

"Why do you come so close to me? Can't you be where others are?" asked the hermit in a stern tone.

"I felt shy to say within other's hearing that I am looking for a good bride for myself. Please bless me so that I can be successful in my search," Govind said humbly.

"All right, your desire will be fulfilled," said the hermit.

All Govind wanted was to hear the hermit speak from close quarters. When the hermit spoke he could understand from the smell that the fellow had drunk wine.

Govind turned and took position behind the crowd. Some leading villagers stepped forward and said, "O pious one, we have come to you with the very prayer which we had made last time. Please save us from the menace of the bandits."

"I have heard your prayer. In the meanwhile, sitting in meditation, I have come to know the nature of the bandits. They are a group of tantriks. They are assisted by ghosts and goblins. It will be futile for you to try to check them. In a week's time, I will tackle them through my tantrik power. I am waiting for the auspicious hour. They can be easily captured thereafter," announced the hermit gravely.

"Well, we have to endure the menace for a week more, I am afraid," the village headman informed the crowd. The people sighed and returned to their village.

But Govind did not leave the forest. He knew that if he comes again, alone, he will be observed. He quietly crept into a thick bush and dozed off, with his faithful dog coiling beside him.

He was wide awake by evening. Soon moonlight seeped through the foliage. Govind waited with great patience, without making the slightest noise.

At midnight his dog began growling. He patted it to silence. Slowly coming out of the bush, he saw three fellows briskly walking in the direction



of the hermit's banian tree. Govind followed them crouching. They went and stood before the hermit. Without a word, the hermit got up and removed the tiger-skin and the plank on which he sat. There was a hole under it. The things the three fellows brought were slipped into the hole and they sat down to partake of food and wine. Govind observed that none of them had really a beard!

Cautiously and slowly he retreated. He was in the village by morning.

Two hours later, when he knew that the people were now

ready for their daily activities, he ran along the village street, announcing, "I have just come from the forest. The hermit, by his power, has tackled the bandits."

The announcement caused a sensation and the villagers came out to the street. Govind told them that the hermit desires them to rush into the forest with arms and surround the area around the banian tree, all the while shouting, "The bandits are caught!"

The villagers were too happy to follow the direction. Govind led them. Within minutes the banian tree had been surrounded.

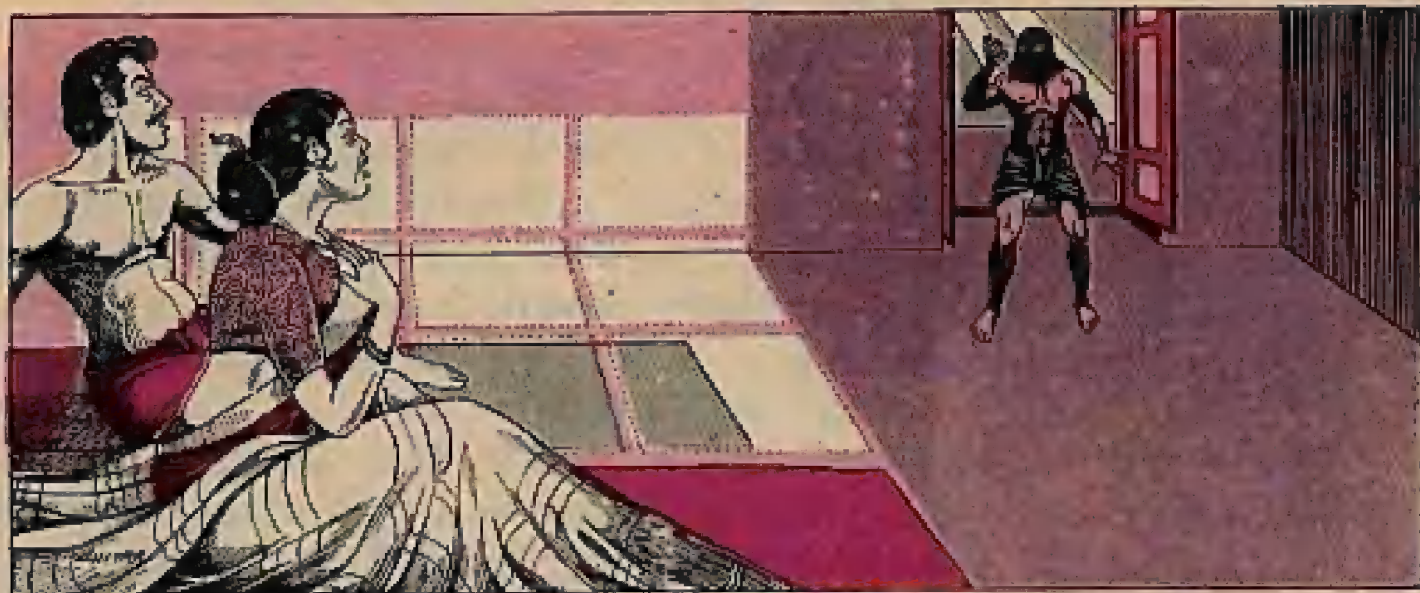
The unexpected raid terrified the false hermit and his assistants. They stood shivering. Govind gave a sudden pull to the hermit's beard. It came off.

There were shouts of surprise. Govind then pulled the false beards off the hermit's assistants too. The fellows stood exposed. The villagers had no difficulty in understanding who the four really were. They rushed at them menacingly to give them a good thrashing. But Govind stopped them. At his direction some young men ran to inform the chief of the king's guards.

Govind then found the hole and the hidden property for the villagers. Under the supervision of the elders, the people took back whatever they had lost to the bandits during the fortnight.

The guards arrived and took charge of the bandits. Govind was looked upon as a hero. But he was a traveller. He soon left the village with his dog.





THE DACOIT'S LAST ADVENTURE

Sudhir was a zamindar's clerk. Who does not know that such officials often made money illegally either by intimidating the poor peasants or by pleasing them through some petty favours?

Such petty official understood the laws of land far better than their masters. The zamindars knew how corrupted they were, but were helpless without them.

But Sudhir was an exception. He hated exploiting the innocent. He was quite satisfied with his regular salary. His wife, Savitri, was brave and intelligent. She managed the household well.

But many had an impression that Sudhir had a lot of money stacked in his house. Among

those who thought so was a dacoit, who passed on as a gentleman in the society. He commanded some influence and even respect. Nobody could imagine that he burgled people's houses at night.

One day the dacoit entered Sudhir's house. There was nobody in the house except Sudhir and his wife. After searching the other rooms, the dacoit entered the couple's bedroom and shouted, raising his dagger, "If you have any desire to be spared of your lives, tell me where you have hidden your wealth. Quick!"

"Dacoit, sir! I am a poor clerk. How do you expect me to have money worth your pains? Maybe, there is a rupee

or two in my pocket," said Sudhir, panicky at the threat.

"I am no fool to believe in your story. Show me your wealth or I will finish you," growled the masked dacoit, and he gave a beating to Sudhir.

"Please stop!" cried out Savitri, and turning to her husband, she said, "Well, it is a question of life and death for us. Better you lead him to the next room and show him the spot where the pot with our gold and silver lies buried."

Sudhir caught the hint. Pretending to be reluctant, he led the dacoit into the next room.

Immediately Savitri locked

the room from outside.

"What is this?" demanded the dacoit through the window.

"Don't you understand? You have been tricked," said Savitri, handing over a dagger to her husband through the window.

"My dear sister, God will bless you with a son. Let me go," pleaded the dacoit.

"How am I to be sure that you will not try to attack us once I open the door? Throw your dagger out first," said Savitri.

The dacoit realised the gravity of the situation. He threw away the dagger.



"Why are you wasting your time?" Savitri took her husband to task. "Had not this fellow assaulted you? Why don't you show him how it feels to be beaten up?"

Sudhir, who was stronger than the dacoit, gave the fellow a good thrashing.

"You have given me a very good lesson, my dear sister and brother! Please allow me to go now," the dacoit cried out.

"How can we?" asked Savitri. "We have not been able to pay up our debt which, along with the interest, amounts to five hundred rupees. We will be fools not to take advantage of

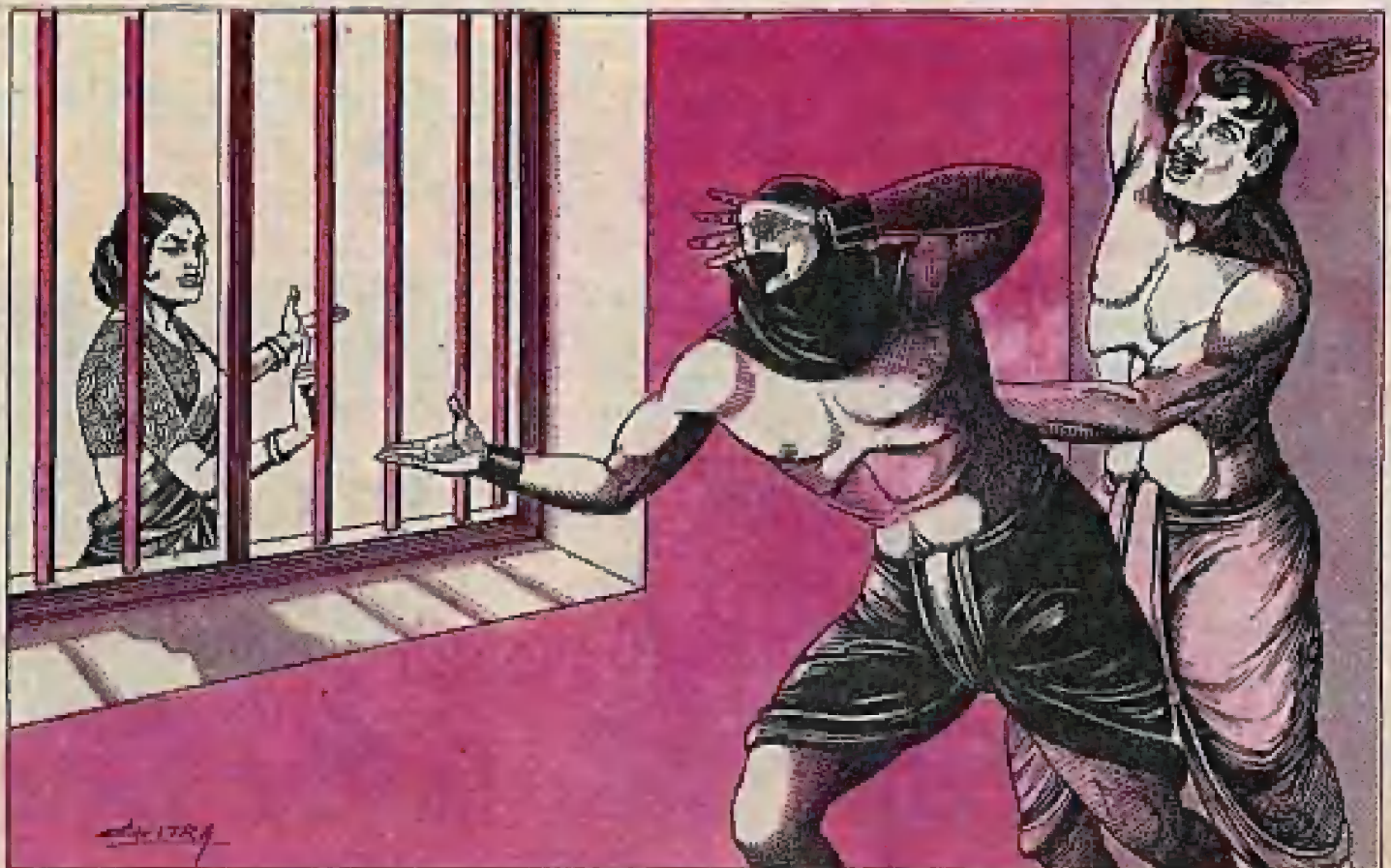
your generosity!"

"All right, sister, I promise to give you five hundred rupees. Let me go," said the dacoit.

"It is not a question of just five hundred. For five years we have been planning to go out on a pilgrimage. But where is the money? We need at least five hundred on that account!" said Savitri.

"I promise to give you a thousand. Please let me go," cried out the dacoit.

"Well, well, what about the expense involved in receiving my daughter—my only child—with her husband? They are coming very soon. Should I not buy



them new clothes?" asked Savitri.

"I promise to give you five hundred rupees more, my sister!" said the dacoit in a cracking voice. "That is all I can afford!"

"Very good. Now, write a letter to your wife to hand over the amount to me. And let me carry that ring of yours to convince her that indeed you are our prisoner!" proposed Savitri.

The dacoit removed his ring and handed it over to Savitri and wrote a letter to his wife.

"Now, give me the address of your house," demanded Savitri.

The dacoit almost wept. But he had to reveal who he was.

Savitri waited till it was dawn. She then proceeded to the dacoit's house, told his wife all that had happened and showed

her not only her husband's ring, but also his dagger!

The dacoit's wife wept and acted according to the letter. She gave even five hundred rupees more with a request to Savitri never to divulge the episode.

Savitri agreed to keep the incident a secret provided the woman dissuaded her husband from carrying on his roguery. The woman promised to do so.

It was only after Savitri returned with the prize that the dacoit was allowed to go.

"Come again," said Sudhir.

"No. You will never see me again, neither as a dacoit nor as a gentleman," he said.

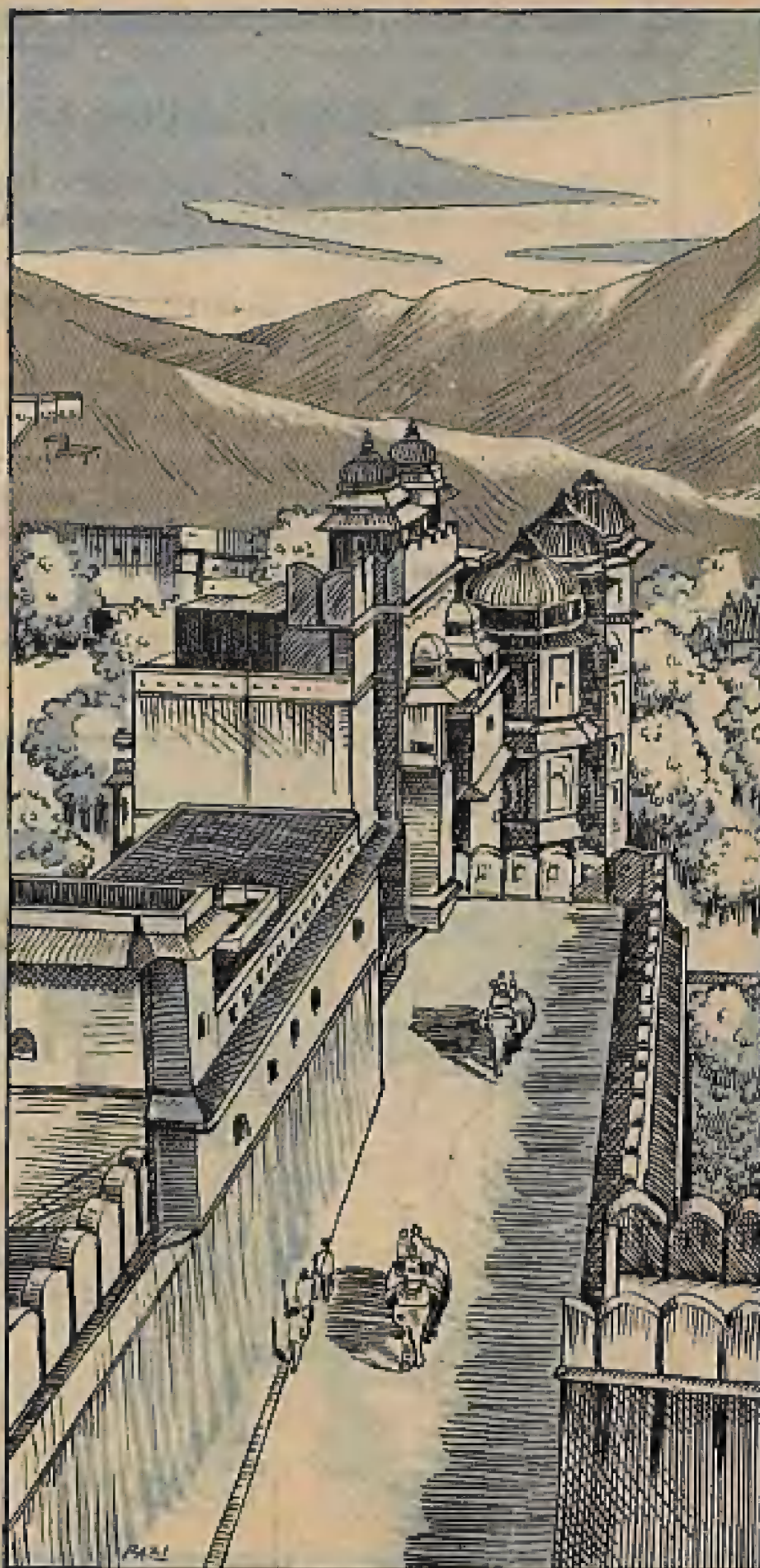
The same day he left the province along with his wife. He was afraid of his humiliation should Sudhir and Savitri give out the story.



MONUMENTS OF INDIA

THE FORT OF AMBER

Amber, the ancient capital of Jaipur, Rajasthan, is situated on hills, spilling over to a picturesque valley. The place is named after Amba, the Mother-Goddess, and the earliest fort here had been founded by Minas, who ruled the land before the Rajputs. However, the fort we see today was built, phase by phase, between 12th and 18th centuries, when the Rajput princes ruled from here. The fort is remarkable for its architecture and grandeur.



A GRAMMATICAL QUARREL

Mintoo informed the teacher, pointing his finger at Bob who bore a bruise on his chin. "He was knocked down with a bicycle."

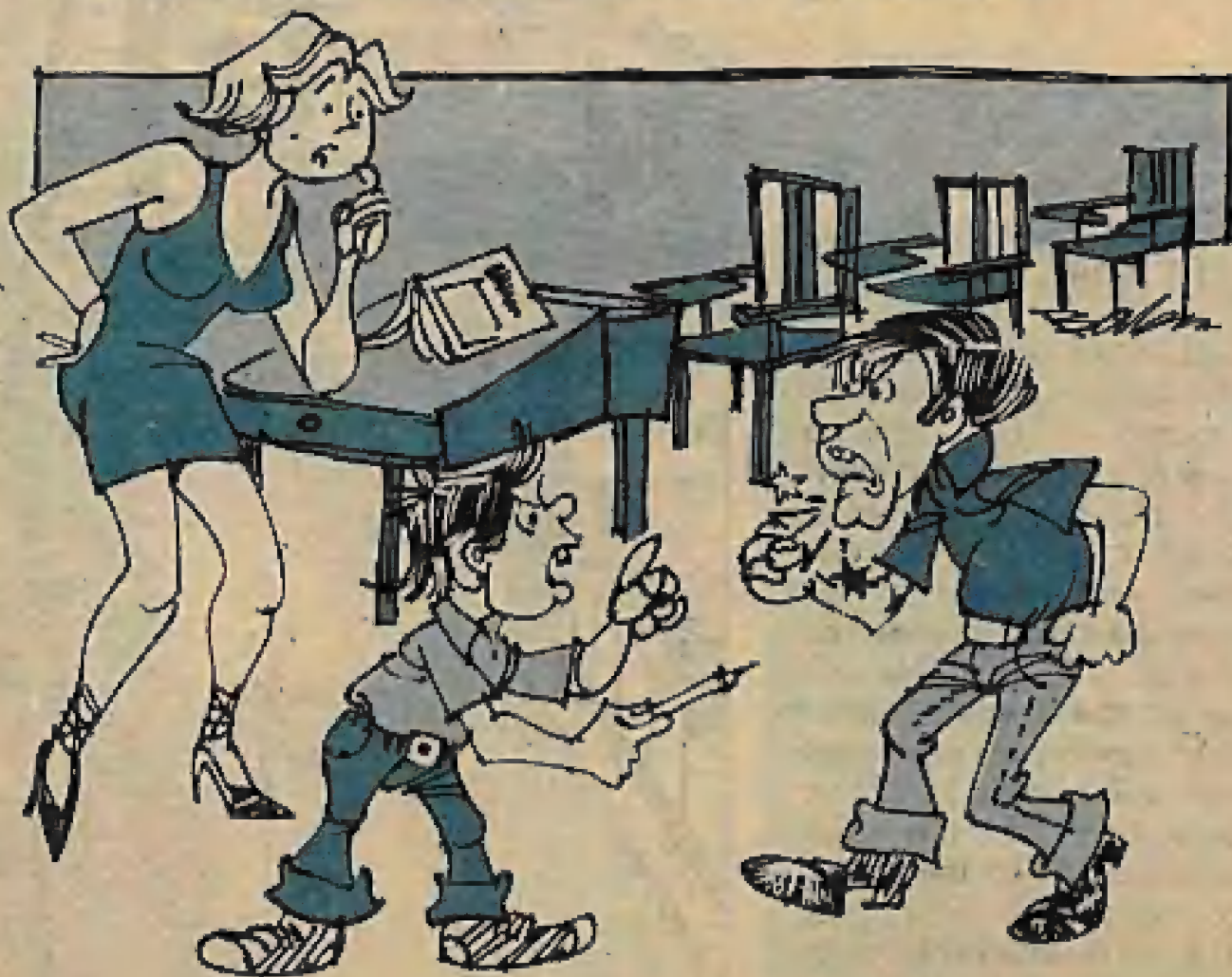
"No!" protested Bob.

"How dare you deny a fact!" exclaimed Mintoo as he hit his friend with a pencil.

"Yes, you have hit me *with* a pencil, but I was knocked down not with a bicycle, but *by* a bicycle!" asserted Bob.

So, it was a grammatical quarrel! Bob was correct. *By* denotes the doer or the agent of some action, while *with* denotes the thing, the instrument, used in the action. In all probability, nobody used a bicycle as an instrument with which to hit Bob. Below is a sentence in which both the words are present. Make a careful note of their use.

The door was painted *by* Suresh *with* a thick brush.





LET US KNOW

What is a rainbow?

Sandeep N. Sonani, Madras
H. Shah, Thana (Maharashtra)

Rainbow, a colourful bow consisting of the colours of the spectrum, is seen against the sky when sunlight falls on the rain. The phenomenon is caused by the reflection and the refraction of the light in the water drops. The rainbow forms over a spray of a waterfall or fountain too.

The coloured beams appear, all must have noticed, as concentric arcs; but there is evidence of a straight rainbow having been seen on 26th of May, 1893, at Aboyne. It was a perfect rainbow exhibiting the full set of colours from red to violet, but without the slightest curve.

Nor is the rainbow always colourful. A white rainbow had been seen over Edinburgh in January 1878.

No satisfactory explanation of these abnormal phenomena has been put forth.

Why is the moon called Maternal Uncle - Chandamama?

Gangadhar Jena, Pichukuli (Orissa)

The moon emerged from the ocean as a result of the Churning of the Ocean, the *Samudra Manthan* (see "Story of India" in the December '77 number of your magazine), along with Goddess Lakshmi. Hence the moon is looked upon as Lakshmi's brother. Goddess Lakshmi being a form of the Divine Mother, the moon is our maternal uncle. This is the most acceptable one of several legends.

CHOOSE A TITLE AND WIN A REWARD

(You are invited to choose a title for the following story and write it down on a post card and mail it to 'Story-title Contest' Chandamama, 2 & 3, Arcot Road, Madras - 600 026, to reach us by the 20th of July. A reward of Rs. 25.00 will go to the best entry which will be published in the September '78 issue. Please do not use the same card for entering the Photo-Caption Contest).



Once a king, on a wrong ground, ordered his jester to be hanged.

"What is your last wish?" asked the king.

"I want to drink a cup of water," was the jester's reply.

The jester was given a cup of water. But he shivered so violently, as if at the fear of death, that he could not hold the cup steady near his mouth.

"Be at ease and drink the water. You shall not be hanged until you have drunk," said the king.

"My lord, do you mean to say that I shall not be hanged as long as I go on feeling thirsty and drinking water?" queried the jester.

"Don't try to be clever. I mean as long as you have not drunk up this particular cup of water," said the king.

"Do you promise it, my lord?" asked the jester.

"I promise," assured the king.

The jester upturned the cup. The water was spattered on the ground.

"My lord, I will never be able to drink this particular cup of water," he said. "And if you are true to your promise, you can never hang me."

The king laughed and let go the jester.

Result of Story Title Contest held in May issue

The Prize is awarded to:

Ms. S. Geetha,

1-79/1 Vani Nagar, Malkaj Giri,

Secunderabad 500 047.

Winning Entry—'THE SAGACIOUS KING'

PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST



Mr. P. V. Subramanyam



Mr. P. Sundaram

- These two photographs are somewhat related. Can you think of suitable captions? Could be single words, are several words, but the two captions must be related to each other.
- Rs. 25 will be awarded as prize for the best caption. Remember, your entry, must reach us by 20th JULY
- Winning captions will be announced in SEPTEMBER issue.
- Write your entry on a POST CARD, specify the month, give your full name, address, age and post to :

**PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST
CHANDAMAMA MAGAZINE
MADRAS - 600 026**

Result of Photo Caption Contest held in May issue

The Prize is awarded to:

Mr. E. Das Ernest,

Bible Society of India,

20 Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bangalore 560 001.

Winning Entry—'Rural Contentment'—'Urban Achievement'



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